

Marine Advisory Committee

August 5, 2014

Milton, Florida

The Marine Advisory Committee met on above date with the following members present:

Jeff Marker, Rick Harris, Scot Mason and Scott Walker. Also present was the County Administrator, Hunter Walker; Chris Verlinde, Marine Extension Agent; Roger Blaylock, County Engineer; and Avis Whitfield, Public Works Director. Chairman Jeff Marker called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

The minutes of the June 3, 2014 meeting were approved.

FISH ADVISORY SIGNAGE

Jack Bonney was in attendance requesting the Marine Advisory Committee place signage at the boat launches alerting fishermen that launch in Escambia Bay/River of a fish advisory. He stated that the fish advisory had been in effect for quite some time for the Escambia River. He added that he noticed it was shortly after the old pilings had been removed to make a reef out in the gulf, which created a disturbance of toxins along the bottom of the bay, that an advisory was issued that included lower Escambia Bay. He said that there is nothing at Glover Lane that alerts people to the advisory. Hunter Walker stated that he had contacted the Health Department to inquire about health advisories and who issued them. Rick Harris said the Bream Fisherman Association led the charge and for years did the testing in the bay when DEP was stating that there was nothing wrong. He added that there has been issues for years and he is in agreement that there should be signage but it was a Health Department issue. Hunter Walker said that putting up signage would be a fairly dramatic departure from anything that had been done in the past and that it might be a better idea to educate people about using the website. He added that we can start canvassing the other counties across the state that have done notices in the past to use as a guide but would be very hesitant to issue any kind of advisory.

Sandra Park-O'Hara from the Health Department said she had done some research and after reviewing the table it appears that there are only two fish that are in question per the state website. She said there are eight (8) different sites for Santa Rosa County and because of that it would be very difficult to put signage up. She added that it would be their recommendation to refer people back to the website. She said that they would be willing to put a link to the state website from their website for individuals to look at but to try to target which fish and for which population would be difficult for signage.

Mr.

Marker said he appreciated this being brought to the attention of this committee but

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Ms. Park-O'Hara said the Health Department had recently started a monthly column in the Navarre Press and the fish advisory issue was covered in that column. She added that they can put out additional information in the column as well as put information on the Health Department website. The WIC (women, infant, child) program is also doing a lot of education on fish consumption.

Barbara Albrect, President of the Bream Fisherman Association, read a statement she had prepared (attached) outlining the concerns she has for contaminants affecting the water and sediments that eventually accumulate in our area seafood. She urged Santa Rosa

County to be proactive and inform citizens through signage that eating fish could be detrimental to their health if eaten on a regular basis. She added that people should be made aware but danger should not be incited. Mr. Bonney added that it would just need to be a simple sign, very straight forward with information at the bottom of the sign instructing people to go to the website for more information.

Mr. Harris said that one of the components in our bays that compounds the issue and has for a long time as compared to Tampa Bay is the broad opening from the Gulf which our bay doesn't have. He added that our bay doesn't flush out like other bays south of here.

Ms. Albrecht said the issues in the waters in our area are not coming from the Gulf but from upland.

Mr. Marker said a lot of the issues discussed are not under our scope but due to the fact that we are in charge of the boat ramps, we can make a recommendation to put up signage. That would be the only thing that falls within our sphere of influence. Hunter Walker stated that before a decision is made, he would like the Health Department to review what has been done in other parts of the state and seek their input. Mr. Marker suggested that this be brought back to this committee in the next couple of months. Mr. Marker asked Ms. Park-O'Hara to email the committee with any information she obtains from other counties in the state.

PROJECTS

Boater Registration Fees as of July 31, 2014 is \$177,884.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Due to a conflict in September, the next meeting was scheduled for October 7, 2014 at 5:00p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee the meeting was adjourned at 5:50p.m.

ISSUES UPDATE

that it would fall under the jurisdiction of the Health Department. He added that it would be impractical to go to every boat ramp and post signage for a particular fish. He said that he does like the idea of generalized signage informing individuals that the fish they are eating may pose a danger and provide information on how to access the website so they can obtain the data. He said that if signage is placed it should be simple and easy enough for people to understand.